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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 003241

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SUBJECT: GOC MAKES INITIAL ARRESTS IN AWA MASSACRE

REF: REF A: BOGOTA 2765; REF B: BOGOTA 2839; REF C: BOGOTA 3073

CLASSIFIED BY: Mark Wells, Political Counselor; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Colombian National Police (CNP) arrested five members of the criminal band "Cockroaches" ("Las cucarachas") for their alleged involvement in the August 26 murders of 12 Awa indigenous. United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Chief of Mission Christian Salazar said prosecutors had likely identified the material culprits, but suggested further investigation could uncover rogue military involvement. Salazar expressed frustration over the stalled investigation into the alleged "false positive" murder of the husband of one of the massacre victims. End Summary.

COLOMBIAN POLICE MAKE ARRESTS IN MASSACRE

12. (U) The CNP made five arrests in the August 26 murders of 12 Awa indigenous in the Gran Rosario reserve, 80 kilometers from Tumaco (Narino). According to the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia), the suspects are members of the criminal gang "Cockroaches," which has ties to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Defense Minister Gabriel Silva Lujan announced the gang had targeted the extended family to silence a witness to one of their crimes. The Prosecutor General's office has issued arrest warrants for five additional individuals.

UNHCHR SUGGESTS MORE TO UNCOVER

13. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on October 8, United

Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Chief of Mission Christian Salazar said his organization had been close to the investigation and credited UNHCHR's expressed interest with speeding the process. Salazar believed prosecutors had likely identified the material culprits, but did not rule out the possibility of uncovering rogue military involvement as the suspects provide information. He cited "disturbing similarities"--including killing children and targeting a witness--to two previous murder cases of the Awa in which criminal elements of the military were later discovered to be involved.

14. (C) Salazar expressed concern over "contradictions" in the alleged "false positive"--military murder reported as combat kill--case of Gonzalo Rodriguez, husband of massacre victim Tulia Garcia Guanga. (Note: Some NGOs attributed the massacre to the military's desire to silence Garcia who was reportedly the sole witness to her husband's May 2009 murder (REF A)). Salazar said he had twice requested that President Uribe ensure that the military justice system transfer Rodriguez' case to the ordinary justice system to no avail.

INDIGENOUS GROUP NOT CONVINCED

15. (C) Luis Evelis Andrade, President of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), told us October 13 that he was concerned the investigation had so quickly discarded the possibility of military involvement. In a press release issued October 14, ONIC obliquely questioned the authorities' claims that a criminal group with FARC ties was responsible for the August massacre, when one of the victims was a witness to a "false positive" crime.

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